



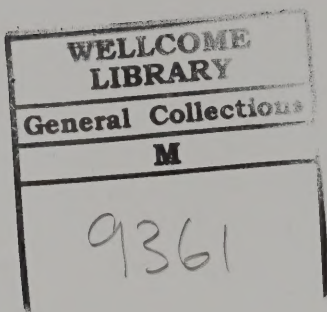
TACKLING DRUGS IN PRISON

The Prison Service Drug Strategy

May 1998

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TACKLING DRUGS IN PRISON

THE NEW PRISON SERVICE DRUG STRATEGY

Preface

The April 1995 strategy document "Drug Misuse in Prisons" has provided a robust framework for progress in the Prison Service's work against drug misuse. There is now:

- evidence of progress on reducing the prevalence of illegal drug misuse in prisons ; and

- emerging evidence that prison can provide an effective environment for interventions with problem drug users. Properly targeted, and with support following release, interventions in prison have the potential to interrupt cycles of abuse and recidivism.

The Government remains wholly committed to the reduction of illegal drug use in prisons, to provide a safe and healthy environment for those who live and work in them.

However, there is a need to take on board the new Government's strategic national approach to drugs issues, and specifically the national strategy, "Tackling Drugs To Build A Better Britain". The Prison Service has a key part to play in that national strategy because it holds a particularly damaged and potentially damaging population of problem drug misusers. There is therefore the potential for very significant harm reduction both for these individuals and for the families and communities to which they will return. Effective intervention will help to reduce crime associated with drug misuse.

The broad framework of the Prison Service's strategy of the last 3 years is built upon by this new strategy. Prisons must continue to work at reducing both supply of and demand for illegal drugs, and at reducing the potential for damage to prisoners' health associated with drug misuse. This new strategy seeks to focus and balance that work under the four aims of the Government's national strategy:

i) "help young people to resist drug misuse in order to achieve their full potential in society"

The Prison Service must provide an environment in which young inmates in particular are helped to resist the lure of illegal drugs, and educated about the consequences of misuse. Research shows that the peak age for drug misuse amongst the prison population is 23. So there is an opportunity to make an impact that can prevent harm later .

ii) *"Protect our communities from drug-related anti-social and criminal behaviour"*

Prisons are communities. To be constructive and safe places in which to live and work, the menace of drugs must be tackled. The issues are similar to those outside prison, and the strategy requires Governors to adopt an approach that tackles effectively the harm that flows from the presence of illegal drugs. This means a discriminating approach, targeting those who supply and deal in drugs, whilst providing supported opportunities to those who want to break out of a cycle of abuse. Crucially, prisons offer the opportunity, through voluntary testing, for prisoners to participate in drug free communities. Part of our strategy is to make that opportunity available to all prisoners in due course.

Prisoners who leave prison after experiencing a drug free way of life need to be properly supported in maintaining it. With that help, interventions in prison have the potential to reduce recidivism amongst drug users.

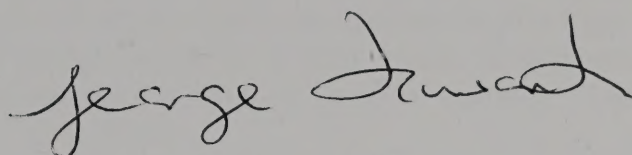
iii) *"enable people with drug problems to overcome them and live healthy and crime free lives"*

The Prison Service needs continually to evaluate and learn from the wide range of treatment provision it offers and that is available in the community. It can do better in matching provision to identified need. It also needs to improve its performance, in collaboration with other agencies, in ensuring that prisoners who have started to make progress in custody are helped to continue that progress on release and to devise effective strategies for helping short term and remand prisoners who may not be in prison long enough to participate in most treatment programmes. This strategy requires a fresh impetus to the business of throughcare, and area co-ordinators are being appointed working directly to each of the Prison Service's area managers to provide a focal point both for prisons and for local agencies and services with which we must cooperate in tackling drugs. The Prison Service must play its full part in the work of Drug Action Teams in particular.

iv) *"Stifle the availability of illegal drugs on our streets"*

There can be no let-up in the Prison Service's effort to control the flow of illegal drugs into prisons. This strategy's focus on helping individual prisoners to use the period of custody to break their pattern of abuse in no way undermines the importance of effective intelligence and security procedures. The availability of illegal drugs will continue to be a key indicator of the Service's performance. But there is room for the Service's tactics to develop, with a greater emphasis on targeted, repeat and voluntary, rather than just random testing, and a more discriminating use of the internal disciplinary system to bear down on suppliers and dealers.

The Government's national strategy invites and requires a cost-effective response from the Prison Service. This document sets out the framework within which the Prison Service will deliver that response. That response must be delivered locally, but will be coordinated centrally by a single team working within the Directorate of Regimes. I believe the Service is particularly well placed to make an outstanding contribution, through effective interventions with drug misusers whose whole history is of damage to themselves and those around them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George Howarth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'G' and a long, sweeping tail.

George Howarth MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Tackling Drugs in Prison

This strategy provides the policy framework for a Prison Service Order to be published during 1998/9, which will incorporate and update the practical guidance contained in "Drug Misuse in Prison"; published in April 1995. It is constructed around the four aims of the Government's ten year national strategy "Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain" (Cm 3945).

Aim (i) "To help young people resist drug misuse in order to achieve their full potential in society"

Controlling both supply and demand remains the key objective, but the Prison Service will develop its response by:

- an examination with the voluntary sector of best practice in education about drug misuse, and of provision for juveniles and young offenders in particular;
- developing constructive regimes for all prisoners that provide an incentive to look ahead to a life without drug abuse;
- liaising closely with other agencies in the youth justice system to provide effective throughcare for juveniles and young offenders on release;

Research shows that the peak age for drug misuse amongst prisoners is 23, which suggests that a special responsibility lies with those caring for younger prisoners to provide an environment that leads them away from a lifestyle of abuse. So the needs of younger inmates will be examined separately, in keeping with the Prison Service's approach to regimes generally. Juveniles represent a special challenge for the Service within that group, and there is an obligation to provide the best in drugs education in a supportive but disciplined environment.

Similarly, the particular needs of female prisoners require separate examination as part of this strategy, drawing on the expertise of those both within and outside the service.

Aim (ii) "To protecting our communities from drug related anti social and criminal behaviour"

We will continue to target those who seek to profit from the misuse of drugs in prisons, and we will:

- develop an indicator of performance based on action taken against suppliers and dealers;
- encourage governors to make anti-social drug related activity a key criterion within incentives and earned privileges schemes
- encourage Governors to discriminate effectively within the disciplinary system between more and less harmful drug related activity, so that the pattern of punishment and response by way of treatment and support more closely follows that pattern in the community at large;

Because we believe that prison based interventions can be the start of longer term change, and protect the communities into which prisoners return, we will conduct research to assess the contribution of such interventions to reductions in recidivism following release.

Aim (iii) "to enable people with drug problems to overcome them and live healthy and crime free lives"

We will examine the resources available for effective treatment interventions and evaluation . In particular, we will:

- task area co-ordinators to conduct a needs analysis in each area, and devise and cost strategies for giving all prisoners access to voluntary testing;
- improve the match between identified need and appropriate treatment provision;
- provide guidance centrally on the establishment of voluntary testing units and their use alongside a range of treatment opportunities suitable for offenders;
- reduce centrally required levels of random testing to give more leeway locally for voluntary, repeat and targetted testing;
- ensure that drugs issues are effectively tackled in sentence planning and throughcare arrangements;

- devise effective strategies to help short term and remand prisoners, and develop strategies to increase referrals to community based agencies;
- work with the UK anti-drugs co-ordinator and with other agencies to develop agreed quality standards for effective practice, including assessment protocols, and interventions, including relapse prevention;
- continue to provide appropriate healthcare interventions within the framework of a revised Prison Service health care standard 8, concurrent with Department of Health guidelines, to minimise harm to prisoners' health through drug misuse;
- encourage close liaison between HIV and AIDS teams and those charged with taking forward the drugs strategy in prisons;
- audit the provision of training on drug issues provided to prison staff, reviewing content and levels of provision during 1998, with a view to providing a coherent training strategy for 1999/2000.

Aim (iv) "to stifle the availability of illegal drugs on our streets"

We will not let up on the battle to reduce the flow of illegal drugs into prisons. But we will:

- learn from and promulgate best practice;
- discriminate effectively between those whose activity causes most harm, and others who genuinely wish to break their addiction;
- set targets for reduced availability of both opiates and other drugs, and continue to be vigilant for any signs that prisoners may be switching from less to more damaging misuse.
- disrupt the distribution networks for illegal drugs in prisons
- seek to reward drug free behaviour in the provision of incentives and earned privileges

Monitoring performance and securing effective partnership

A new single unit within the Directorate of Regimes in Prison Service Headquarters will be responsible for leading the Service's response to the national drugs strategy. Its role will be both to lead and support the Prison Service in delivering this strategy over the next ten years. It will need to ensure both that performance is closely monitored and that the lessons of experience and independent evaluation continue to be incorporated as the strategy develops. In particular, it will:

-report in March 1999 to Ministers and the UK anti-drugs co-ordinator on progress

-in close co-operation with the UK anti drugs co-ordinator, develop measures of performance for the Prison Service that link to national strategy indicators, and in particular:

- reducing recidivism amongst drug misusing offenders
- increasing referrals for treatment
- increasing treatment programme completions
- deterring and detecting drug availability in prisons

-provide a focal point for area co-ordinators

-commission research into key elements of this strategy, building on the substantial research base that already underpins it;

-strengthen links between the prison service and other statutory and voluntary agencies

-monitor the spend of funds allocated to testing and treatment and provide central guidance on the commissioning and evaluation of partnership treatment interventions;

- play a key role in re-energising the Service's training effort on drugs issues;

-ensure that security , health and regimes interests in the strategy remain in balance;

- develop the Prison Service's policy in relation to other substance abuse, and in particular the abuse of alcohol by prisoners.

Area co-ordinators will play a critical role in the delivery of the strategy. As well as monitoring and promoting effective practice, they will be required to ensure that the Prison Service plays a full and effective role in the development of the national drugs strategy at a local level. In particular, the Prison Service wishes to improve its representation on Drug Action Teams, and to work effectively with local communities to ensure that gains made in prison are not dissipated on release.

Conclusion

This strategy builds on the experience of the last three years and the research described in the accompanying published review of the previous drug strategy. It charts a way forward, balancing the same elements of improved security, harm reduction and treatment interventions. It signals a determination to use the opportunity of effective intervention in custody to reduce significantly the damage done to communities by offenders on release. It places the Prison Service's work entirely within the context of the government's national drug strategy and its commitment to partnership between statutory and non-statutory agencies. It is based on a thorough evaluation of the Service's efforts to date and commits the service to a continuing cycle of measurement and evaluation in the future.

Directorate of Regimes
May 1998

